

Message Text

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SUBJECT: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS CONFERENCE ON TORTURE
IN URUGUAY

1. ON FEBRUARY 19 AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (AI) HELD A PRESS
CONFERENCE AT CHURCH CENTER FOR THE UNITED NATIONS ON AI'S
CAMPAIGN AGAINST TORTURE IN URUGUAY. PARTICIPANTS WERE AI
BOARD MEMBERS RAMSEY CLARK, ROSE STYRON, AND ANDREW BLANE,
AND AI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DAVID HAWK.

2. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF RAMSEY CLARK'S STATEMENT. STATEMENTS
BY OTHER PARTICIPANTS AND OTHER MATERIAL BEING POUCHED
TO TEFET, IO/UNP, BRAZEAL, ARA/APU, AND EMBASSY MONTEVIDEO.
QUOTE

ISSUED AT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS CONFERENCE ON CAMPAIGN AGAINST
TORTURE IN URUGUAY, 10:00 AM, FEBRUARY 19, 1976, CHURCH CENTER
FOR THE UN, 777 UN PLAZA, NEW YORK CITY.

THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES HAVE A LONG HISTORY OF
CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. THIS YEAR, AS A NATION,
WE WILL BE SPENDING A GREAT DEAL OF TIME AND EFFORT REAFFIRMING
OUR TWO-HUNDRED-YEAR -OLD COMMITMENT TO THE PROPOSITION
THAT EVERY HUMAN BEING IS ENDOWED WITH CERTAIN INALIENABLE RIGHTS.
TRAGICALLY, IN THE WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE WE MUST ALSO CONTINUE
TO GIVE ATTENTION TO THE DENIALS OF SUCH RIGHTS, TO
THE FAR TOO FREQUENT INSTANCES OF BRUTALITY, TORTURE, DEATH
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THAT ENCOMPASS INDIVIDUAL LIVES.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (AI) IS TODAY LAUNCHING A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO PROTEST THE USE OF TORTURE AND OTHER GROSS VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN URUGUAY.

URUGUAY, A SMALL COUNTRY WITH A POPULATION OF TWO-AND-A HALF MILLION, WAS ONCE KNOWN AS THE SWITZERLAND OF LATIN AMERICA. IT COULD POINT WITH PRIDE TO A LONG CONSTITUTIONAL TRADITION, A WORLD-WIDE REPUTATION FOR POLITICAL STABILITY, A HIGH LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE. THIS HAS CHANGED WITH UNBELIEVEABLE RAPIDITY. IT IS EVIDENCED IN THE "TORTURED TO DEATH IN URUGUAY" LIST WHICH AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IS RELEASING TODAY, A COMPILATION OF 22 PERSONS WHOSE DEATHS AT THE HANDS OF OFFICIAL URUGUAYAN TORTURERS FROM MAY 1972 THROUGH NOVEMBER 1975 HAVE BEEN DOCUMENTED.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ESTIMATES THAT TODAY THERE ARE NEARLY 6,000 POLITICAL PRISONERS IN URUGUAY. THIS CONSTITUTES THE HIGHEST PER CAPITA CONCERNATION OF POLITICAL PRISONERS ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD, ONE FOR EVERY 450 CITIZENS.

SINCE 1972 APPROXIMATELY ONE OUT OF EVERY 50 CITIZENS HAS SUFFERED INTERROGATION, TEMPORARY ARREST OR IMPRISONMENT. THE MOST SINISTER ASPECT OF URUGUAY'S REPRESSIVE APPARATUS IS THE WIDESPREAD AND SYSTEMATIC USE OF TORTURE--NOW ROUTINE IN POLITICAL CASES.

THE POLITICAL PRISONERS IN URUGUAY INCLUDE WORKERS, STUDENTS, DOCTORS, FORMER PARLIAMENTARIANS, TRADE UNIONISTS, LAWYERS AND TEACHERS. THEY ARE HELD IN OVERCROWDED PRISONS, POLICE STATIONS AND MILITARY BARRACKS, OFTEN LACKING THE MOST BASIC NECESSITIES. THEIR LEGAL RIGHTS ARE TRAMPLED UPON BY AN OMNIPRESENT MILITARY JUDICIAL SYSTEM. TRADE UNION RIGHTS HAVE BEEN TOTALLY SUPPRESSED. SEVERAL TRADE UNION BUILDINGS HAVE BEEN CONFISCATED AND TURNED INTO POLICE INTERROGATION CENTERS.

UNDER THE PRETEXT OF COMBATTING ARMED SUBVERSION, EVER WIDER CIRCLES OF PEACEFUL DISSENTERS TO THE DEMISE OF DEMOCRACY HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO OPPRESSION AND PERSECUTION IN URUGUAY.

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ALTHOUGH THE COMMUNISTS APPEAR TO BE THE MAIN TARGET OF THIS PERSECUTION, SOCIALISTS, CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, AND MEMBERS OF THE TRADITIONAL URUGUAYAN POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE ALSO BEEN VICTIMIZED.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IS CONCERNED WITH THESE GROSS AND CONSISTENT VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS--IN PARTICULAR THE WIDESPREAD AND SYSTEMATIC USE OF TORTURE, AS DOCUMENTED IN THE CAREFULLY

GATHERED AND AUTHENTICATED MATERIALS WHICH ARE BEING RELEASED TODAY. THIS INFORMATION DOES NOT MAKE PLEASANT READING. IT SPEAKS OF BARBARISM, INJUSTICE ILLEGALITY; OF CITIZENS SUBJECTED TO THE MOST BRUTAL TREATMENT IMAGINABLE.

UNLIKE IN ITS NEIGHBORS CHILE AND BRAZIL, UNLIKE IN THE USSR, THE GROSS VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN URUGUAY HAS RECEIVED LITTLE ATTENTION, THIS MUST NOT CONTINUE. THE BARBAROUS TREATMENT OF ITS CITIZENRY MUST BE EXPOSED AND ENDED.

AND IT MUST BE DONE NOW. THE SITUATION IS CRITICAL. THE SITUATION IS URGENT. AT THIS VERY MOMENT A DEBATE IS GOING ON IN URUGUAY BETWEEN THOSE WHO URGE A GRADUAL RETURN TO SOME FORM OF DEMOCRACY AND THOSE WHO WOULD CANCEL THE COMING CONSTITUTIONALLY REQUIRED PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND INSTITUTIONALIZE A PERMANENT DICTATORSHIP.

IN THE WEEKS AHEAD, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WILL BE CONDUCTING ONE OF THE BIGGEST CAMPAIGNS IT HAS EVER WAGED TO ENGAGE WORLD OPINION IN A PUBLIC OUTCRY AGAINST THE USE OF TORTURE AND OTHER VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN URUGUAY.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS MASSIVE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN IS TO BRING TO LIGHT AND TO END THE HORROR AND TERROR THAT HAVE COME TO PERMEATE A NATION ONCE RENOWNED AS A MODEL OF DEMOCRACY. ONLY A WORLDWIDE OUTCRY, WE FEEL, CAN HALT THE BRUTAL AND SYSTEMATIC USE OF TORTURE THAT PREVAILS IN URUGUAY. WE DO NOT DENY THE RIGHT OF GOVERNMENTS TO GOVERN, BUT WE DO DENOUNCE AND GOVERNMENT THAT DENIES THE RIGHT OF ITS CITIZENS TO BE FREE FROM TORTURE AND OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED MURDER.

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IF THIS BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION IS TO BE MORE THAN A REFLECTION OF A HISTORIC AND PAST COMMITMENT TO FREEDOM, IT WILL BE SO BECAUSE MANY AMERICAN CITIZENS WILL JOIN WITH OTHERS AROUND THE WORLD TO PERSUADE THE URUGUAYAN GOVERNMENT TO HALT THE PRACTICE OF TORTURE AND POLITICAL REPRESSION AND TO BECOME ONCE AGAIN A JUST AND HOPEFUL LAND ADMIRER BY THE WORLD.

RAMSEY CLARK, FORMER U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL, IS A BOARD MEMBER OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL.

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